MOHENJO-DARO
AND
THE INDUS CIVILIZATION

BEING AN OFFICIAL ACCOUNT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT MOHENJO-DARO CARRIED OUT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA BETWEEN THE YEARS 1922 AND 1927

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DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD

By Sir John Marshall

CHAPTER VII

EXTENT OF THE INDUS CIVILIZATION

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CHAPTER VIII

THE AGE AND AUTHORS OF THE INDUS CIVILIZATION

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can be drawn. Any attempt, therefore, to equate the Sumerians with the ancient Dravidians is complicated at the outset by the difficulty of defining either the Sumerian or the Dravidian type.[1] If, as most authorities on the subject maintain, the Dravidians came out of the west and entered India as invaders, we might suppose that they were originally related to the Mediterraneans who are represented at Kish, Anau, Nāl, and Mohenjo-daro (where the largest proportion of skulls belong to this type), and that the type was subsequently transformed in India itself by intermarriage with proto-Australoids and others. If, however, they were indigenous, as others hold, in India, we must suppose that they were proto-Australoid in origin and developed their Dravidian character by intermingling with foreign elements and by processes of natural evolution. But, in whatever direction they may have moved, whether from east to west or west to east, it would obviously be very rash in the present uncertain state of our knowledge to endeavour to identify as "Dravidian" either the skulls classed by Colonel Sewell as Proto-Australoid (Nos. 2, 11 and M) or those classed as Mediterranean (Nos. 6, 7, 9, 10, 19, and 26); rasher still to identify any of these skulls as "Sumerian".

Vedic Āryans.

It remains, finally, to consider if there are any grounds for identifying the authors of the Indus civilization with the Indo-Āryans of Vedic literature. Here, again, the ethnological aspect of the problem is beset with difficulties. The Indo-Āryan type of Northern India is described by ethnologists as "generally tall of stature, with fair complexion, dark eyes, plentiful hair on face, long head, narrow and prominent but not specially long nose". This type would accord well enough with what the Vedas tell us of the Indo-Āryans, whose features and fair complexion were not infrequently contrasted with those of the dark-skinned, noseless Dasyus, and in the case of the Indo-Āryans it is a plausible supposition that the exclusiveness of their caste system tended to keep their stock more than usually pure. Even so, however, we cannot be sure that their type has not been greatly modified in the course of the centuries, nor can we, without more precise data in the shape of contemporary human remains, determine to what race or races they were physically related. It is still debatable whether they were blonde Nordics, or brunette Mediterraneans or broad-headed Alpines (though this is hardly likely) or perhaps a mixture of all three. But, although for this reason the human remains at Mohenjo-daro afford no help in this question, a comparison of the Indus and Vedic cultures shows incontestably that they were unrelated.

Indus and Vedic cultures contrasted.

Thus, the picture of Indo-Āryan society portrayed in the Vedas is that of a partly pastoral, partly agricultural people, who have not yet emerged from the village state, who have no knowledge of life in cities or of the complex economic organization which such life implies, and whose houses are nondescript affairs constructed largely of bamboo. At Mohenjo-daro and Harappā, on the other hand, we have densely populated cities with solid, commodious houses of brick equipped with adequate sanitation, bathrooms, wells, and other amenities. The metals which the Indo-Āryans used in the time of the Rigveda are gold and copper or bronze; but a little later, in the time of the Yajurveda and Atharvaveda, these metals are supplemented by silver and iron. Among the Indus people silver is commoner than gold, and utensils and vessels are sometimes made of stone—a relic of the Neolithic Age—as well as of copper and bronze. Of iron there is no vestige. For offensive weapons the Vedic-Āryans have the bow and arrow, spear, dagger, and axe, and for defensive armour the helmet and coat of mail. The Indus people also have the bow and arrow, spear, dagger, and axe, but, like the Mesopotamians and Egyptians, they have the mace as well, sometimes of stone, sometimes of metal; while,

[1] In the *Cambridge History of India*, vol. i, the similarity of the Sumerian and Dravidian ethnic types is said to be "undoubted". Yet on p. 85 we read with reference to the epithet *anāsah* that it is a clear indication that the aborigines to which it is applied were of the Dravidian type, as we know it at the present day. From this it might easily be inferred that the Sumerians also were flat-nosed. Could any inference be further from the truth?

on the other hand, defensive armour is quite unknown to them—a fact which must have told against them in any contests with mailed and helmeted foes. The Vedic-Āryans are a nation of meat-eaters, who appear to have had a general aversion to fish, since there is no direct mention of fishing in the Vedas. With the Indus people fish is a common article of diet, and so, too, are molluscs, turtles, and other aquatic creatures.[1] In the lives of the Vedic-Āryans the horse plays an important part, as it did in the lives of many nations from the northern grasslands. To the people of Mohenjo-daro and Harappā the horse seems to have been unknown ; it has no place, at any rate, among the many animals figured at these places, and, though some bones of a horse (*Equus caballus*) were found on the surface at the former site, it is more than probable that they belonged to a later, maybe quite modern, period. By the Vedic-Āryans the cow is prized above all other animals and regarded with special veneration. Among the Indus people the cow is of no particular account, its place with them being taken by the bull, the popularity of whose cult is attested by the numerous figurines and other representations of this animal. Of the tiger there is no mention in the Vedas, and of the elephant but little, but both these animals are familiar to the Indus people. The Vedic religion is normally aniconic. At Mohenjo-daro and Harappā iconism is everywhere apparent. In the Vedic pantheon the female element is almost wholly subordinate to the male, and neither the Mother Goddess nor Śiva (with whom, however, the Vedic Rudra was afterwards to be identified) has any place among its members. Among the Indus cults those of the Mother Goddess and Śiva are prominent, and the female elements appear to be co-equal with, if not to predominate over, the male. Fire (Agni) ranks among the foremost deities of the Veda, and the domestic hearth or firepit (*agni-kunda*) is a characteristic feature of every house. In the houses of Mohenjo-daro the firepit is conspicuously lacking.[2] To the Indo-Āryan phallic worship was abhorrent. Among the Indus people there is abundant evidence of its existence.

Vedic and Indus civilizations unrelated.

As times goes on, doubtless many other salient points of difference will be revealed, but for the moment the above will suffice to demonstrate how wide is the gulf between the Indus and Vedic civilizations. Now it may, perhaps, be argued that the difference between them is a difference of time only ; that the Vedic civilization was either the progenitor or the lineal descendant of the Indus civilization. Neither hypothesis, I fear, is tenable. Let us assume, in the first place, that the Vedic civilization preceded and led up to the Indus civilization. On this hypothesis the progress from the village to the city state and from the nondescript houses of the Vedic period to the massive brick architecture of Mohenjo-daro and Harappā would find a logical explanation, though we should have to postulate a long interval of time in order to account for the evolution. But what about other cultural features ? If the Vedic culture antedated the Indus, how comes it that iron and defensive armour and the horse, which are characteristic of the former, are unknown to the latter ? Or how comes it that the bull replaces the cow as an object of worship in the Indus period, only to be displaced again by the cow in succeeding ages ? Or, again, how comes it that the Indus culture betrays so many survivals of the Neolithic Age—in the shape of stone implements and vessels—if the copper or bronze and iron culture of the Indo-Āryans intervened between the two ? Clearly these considerations put out of court any solution of the problem which postulates an earlier date for the Vedic than for the Indus civilization. But if it was not earlier, are there any grounds for supposing that it was evolved out of the latter ? In other words, could the Indo-Āryans have been the authors of the

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 27.

[2] In HR Area, Section B, Block 2, House IX, Room 85, there is a depression in the latest floor which might conceivably have been an *agni-kunda*, but at best it is a very doubtful example.

Indus as well as of the Vedic civilization? Here, again, we are faced with a like dilemma. For, though on this assumption we could account for such phenomena as the introduction of iron, of the horse, and of body armour, all of which might have signalized merely a later phase of the same culture, we are wholly at a loss to explain how the Indo-Āryans came to relapse from the city to the village state, or how, having once evolved excellent houses of brick, they afterwards contented themselves with inferior structures of bamboo; or how, having once worshipped Śiva and the liṅga and the Mother Goddess, they ceased to do so in the Vedic Period, but returned to their worship later; or how, having once occupied Sind, they subsequently lost all memory of that country and of the Lower Indus.

We need not, however, labour the subject further. Enough has been said to show that, from whatever angle we view these civilizations, it is impossible to discover for them a common source, or to explain their divergent characters on any hypothesis other than that the Vedic was not only the later of the two, but that it had an independent development.

Sequence of Indus and Vedic civilizations.

And this brings us to another question. Are we to assume that the Vedic followed directly after the Indus civilization in the Panjāb, or that there was an interval between them? In Chapter XXIII Professor Langdon expresses the view that the Āryans in India are far more ancient than history has hitherto admitted. "Their migration," he writes, "across Anatolia, where traces of them are found in the inscriptions of the Hittite capital as early as the seventeenth century B.C., is an hypothesis entirely contradictory to the new situation revealed by the discoveries in the Indus Valley. Far more likely is it that the Āryans in India are the oldest representatives of the Indo-Germanic race." Professor Langdon does not seek to identify the Indo-Āryans with the authors of the Indus civilization, but he is led by his theory on the derivation of the Brāhmī from the Indus script to infer that the Āryans must have been established in India and in contact with those authors long before the middle of the second millennium B.C., when, according to the majority of Vedic scholars, they first entered India. With this view of Professor Langdon's I must confess that I find it impossible to agree. His derivation of early Brāhmī from the Indus script may or may not be substantiated. Granted, however, that it is well founded, and granted, too, that it was the Indo-Āryans who evolved the Brāhmī script out of the Indus pictographic signs, is there any evidence that they did this before the latter half of the second millennium B.C.? So far as I am aware, not a shred. The remains at Mohenjo-daro may not carry us later than the first quarter of the third millennium B.C., but we cannot suppose, because this particular city ceased to exist then or because Harappā may have followed suit a few centuries afterwards, that therefore the Indus civilization was totally eclipsed at that time. On the contrary, the remains at Jhukar only a score of miles or so from Mohenjo-daro seem to indicate that this civilization lingered on long after the disappearance of both Mohenjo-daro and Harappā. The days of its glory had doubtless passed; but, even so, there is no justification for supposing that so all important an art as that of writing would have ceased to be practised. In my own view nothing has yet been found either at Mohenjo-daro or Harappā that conflicts with the orthodox theory that the Indo-Āryans entered the Panjāb about the middle of the second millennium B.C.; but from the picture we get in the Vedas of the pre-Āryan population, I incline to think that the Indus civilization could then have been but a mere shadow of its former self.